

lasting one. Their marriage took place two years after his graduation, and was attended with an amusing circumstance which is worth relating.

The wedding took place at Arlington on the evening of Thursday, June 30, 1831. The ceremony, which was witnessed by a large circle of guests, was performed in the right-hand drawing-room of that fine old mansion by the Rev. William Meade, afterward bishop of Virginia. The attendants on the bride and groom, as given by one of the bridesmaids, were the following: First bridesmaid and groomsman, Miss Catharine Mason and Lieutenant Sidney Smith Lee; second, Miss Mary Goldsborough and Lieutenant Thomas Kennedy; third, Miss Marietta Turner and Lieutenant Chambers; fourth, Miss Angela Lewis and Mr. Tillman; fifth, Miss Julia Calvert and Lieutenant Prentiss; sixth, Miss Britannia Peter and Lieutenant Thomas Turner.

The amusing circumstance above referred to, as related by a person present at the wedding, is the following: In the early evening preceding the hour fixed for the wedding a heavy thunderstorm came up, rather unfortunately for the Rev. Mr. Meade, who was yet on the road, and who reached the house thoroughly drenched. It was impossible for him to conduct a marriage ceremony without some change of raiment, and they were obliged to supply him with a suit of clothes belonging to Mr. Custis, the father of the bride. Unluckily for the fit of these garments, Mr. Custis was short and stout, the clergyman tall and thin, and he presented a highly ridiculous appearance to those who saw him in his borrowed plumage. However, the ample folds of the surplice covered all defects of raiment, and the guests generally were unaware of the awkward predicament of the dignified divine.

This was before the days of marriage-journeys, and the festivities were concluded in the mansion, the ceremony being followed by a handsome supper, while the large bridal-party were entertained at Arlington until the evening of the following Monday, when an entertainment was given at the house of General John Mason. The newly-married couple at once settled down to housekeeping in the good old style.

This match was considered a brilliant one for Lieutenant Lee, his wife being looked upon as a great heiress, possessed of a large landed estate and a multitude of slaves. Yet she has often been heard to declare that the advantage of the wedding was largely on her side, since her husband's management of her estate was so skilful and judicious as to make it more valuable and remunerative than she could possibly have done. His profession, however, obliged him to be nearly always absent from home, which was probably a main reason for her father's objection to the marriage.

The property of Miss Custis embraced two mansions, with the accompanying lands: Arlington, on the Virginia heights opposite the city of Washington, and the White House, on the Pamunky River. Arlington is beautifully situated, and commands a view of Washington, Georgetown, and a long stretch of the Potomac, with a wooded background of distant hills and valleys. It was surrounded by groves of stately trees, except in front, where the hill slopes gracefully downward to the low lands bordering the river. This fine old mansion was seized by the Federal Government at the commencement of the Civil War, and occupied by the Federal troops as a camping-ground. It contained valuable relics, many of which were taken away, and never recovered by the family. The White House, on the Pamunky, was the scene of the marriage of General Washington with the widow Custis. This place was also occupied by the Federal troops, and burned—accidentally, no doubt, as some of the Federal officers took every precaution to preserve it on account of its historical associations.

Years afterward, Mrs. Lee, desiring to see once more this beloved home of her dearest memories, came alone to Arlington. Too much of an invalid even to get out of her carriage, she looked sadly around and asked for a cup of water from the spring, and then ordered the driver to take her away. The desecration which had come upon the beloved home of her youth and of so many years of happy married life was too great for the sorrowing invalid to endure.

The fate of the two mansions of the Custis family strongly

illustrates the ravages of war. The White House, as we have said, was burned to the ground, and "not a blade of grass left to mark the culture of more than a hundred years." Arlington was desolated by the war, its groves cut down, its furniture carried off, its precious relics of Washington scattered over the North, and only the shell was left of the beautiful home of the past. The estate finally became the property of the United States Government, and the grounds were converted into a soldiers' cemetery.

We may very briefly finish our account of General Lee's married life by stating that there were born to him seven children. These were, in order of birth, G. W. Custis, Mary, W. H. Fitzhugh, Annie, Agnes, Robert, and Mildred. Of these children, two are dead—Agnes, who died after her father, and Annie, who died October 20, 1862. That General Lee was always exceedingly fond of his family is evidenced in his letters to his wife and children, examples of which will be given in a later portion of this work. They are full of expressions of affection and of wise fatherly advice, and prove that in the very tempest of war the heart of the great soldier was with his loved ones at home, and that he could turn from ordering some momentous movement in the field to write home words of tender sentiment and admonition, and hope of domestic bliss, as if his only cares were those of peaceful life. It is remarkable how little of war and how much of Christian feeling and family affection these letters contain.

General Lee tells an interesting anecdote in connection with one of his sons (Custis), which may fitly be quoted here: When a very little child his father took him to walk one winter's day in the snow, holding him by the hand. Soon the boy dropped behind. Looking over his shoulder, he saw Custis imitating his every movement, with head and shoulders erect, putting his little feet exactly in his father's footprints. "When I saw this," said the general, "I said to myself, 'It behooves me to walk very straight, when this fellow is already following in my tracks.'"

Shortly after his graduation Lieutenant Lee was sent on

engineering duty to Old Point, Virginia. Here he remained for several years. In 1835 he was assigned to a new field of duty, being appointed assistant astronomer on the commission for marking out the boundary-line between Ohio and Michigan. In 1836 he was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant, and in 1838 was made captain in the Engineer corps.

In regard to his life during this period interesting information has been volunteered by some of his friends who were intimately associated with him at that time, both professionally and socially. Mr. James Eveleth relates that he was a clerk in the Engineer department at Fortress Monroe when Lieutenant Robert E. Lee reported there for his first service after graduating at the Academy, and from that time (1829) until 1834, Lee served at Fortress Monroe as assistant to Captain Andrew Talcott, who was in charge of the construction of the fortifications for the defence of Hampton Roads. In 1834, Lee was transferred to Washington as assistant to the chief engineer. Mr. Eveleth was also transferred, on July 1, 1835, as clerk in the Engineer department at Washington, thus keeping up his acquaintance with Robert E. Lee. During all this time Lee enjoyed the affectionate consideration and high appreciation of his brother-officers, as well as of all who came in contact with him. There never was a man more universally beloved and respected. He was conspicuous in the mind of Mr. Eveleth for never having uttered a word among his most intimate associates that might not have been spoken in the presence of the most refined woman. It can always be said of him that he was never heard to speak disparagingly of any one, and when any one was heard so to speak in his presence he would always recall some trait of excellence in the absent one. Mr. Eveleth calls to mind with peculiar interest the affectionate relations existing between Lieutenant Lee and Lieutenant J. E. Johnston, the latter being known to his intimates as Colonel Johnston. It is interesting to think of these two men passing on in unbroken friendship throughout their long and very distinguished careers. He has seen them meet after separation with the affectionate demonstrations of two school-friends.

Every incident relative to the life, associates, and habits of the young lieutenant at this period is of interest as a guide-post on the road to the great distinction which he afterward attained. We are fortunate in being able to give some further information, obtained from his intimate friends. General Meigs describes his daily habits in the following words:

"In 1836-37, Lieutenant Lee was stationed at Washington as assistant to Chief Engineer Colonel Gratiot, and, having married the daughter of G. W. Custis of Arlington, he resided at that place, riding his horse into town every morning in time for the opening of the office at nine o'clock. As all public offices in those days closed at three precisely, his figure, mounted upon a compact Virginia bay horse, was to be seen every afternoon on Pennsylvania Avenue on his return to Arlington. This habit of constant exercise in all kinds of weather, not on wheels, but in the saddle, no doubt contributed to the vigor of his health and the endurance which enabled him to stand the cares, toils, and exposures of many campaigns."

Mrs. Kennan adds that often on his return from the city to Arlington he would stop and make a call on her family at their house in Tudor Place, Georgetown, and that he was always genial and ready to enter into the interests and pleasures of others.

Colonel Macomb, whose remembrance of the cadet-life of General Lee we have already given, adds the following reminiscences of his life in Washington at the period which we have now reached. At that time the colonel had the good fortune to be one of the "mess" at Mrs. Ulrich's, where the Riggs House now stands. The "mess" was composed of Joseph E. Johnston, James H. Prentiss, Thomas J. Lee, Augustus Canfield (who afterward married Miss Cass), James F. Izzard, and John Macomb. Lee was an occasional member of the "mess." Although married and residing at Arlington, yet, being on duty in the Engineer department, he found himself frequently under the necessity of remaining in Washington on account of the roads, which were at times impassable. Besides these young officers there were some distinguished men in the mess: Mahlon Dickerson, Secretary of the Navy; William C. Rives,

who had been minister to France, and who was at this time Senator from Virginia; Hugh Swinton Legaré of South Carolina, an eminent lawyer, then member of Congress from South Carolina, but at an earlier period minister to The Hague; and Joel R. Poinsett, Secretary of War. The presence of the latter frequently brought General Eustis, his brother-in-law, into the membership of the "mess." Mrs. Ulrich felt great partiality for the young officers of the "mess," and would refuse all applications from persons whom she thought would not be acceptable and congenial to them. Under these circumstances it may be understood that the inmates of her house were exceptionally agreeable to each other. Messrs. Legaré and Dickerson often discussed the Greek poets, etc., to the edification of the young soldiers, whose training had been in a different line. An incident which illustrates the gayety of these young officers is here recalled: As Lieutenant Lee was about to start for Arlington on one occasion on his spirited Virginia horse, seeing Macomb approach, he hailed him, saying, "Come, get up with me." To the surprise of Lee, Macomb approached, put his foot in the stirrup, and mounted behind him. Thereupon they rode down Pennsylvania Avenue, and just as they were in front of the President's House they met the Hon. Levi Woodbury, Secretary of the Treasury, to whom they both bowed with great dignity. A more astonished gentleman has not been seen before or since.

In the spring of 1857, Captain Macomb was ordered to Mexico. He went by the Southern route, and spent at San Antonio a delightful week with Colonel Lee, who was then stationed there as lieutenant-colonel of the Second Cavalry. They renewed their old acquaintance, with the custom of visiting the ladies, and had a lively time. This was Colonel Macomb's last interview with his old friend, whom he remembers of all the men of his acquaintance as the most beloved and admired by both men and women. No one was ever jealous of him; all delighted to do him honor. Colonel Macomb recalls that, while stationed at Santa Fé, New Mexico, news came of the alarming illness of General Scott, which led, among the officers, to the discussion of his probable successor. It was universally

agreed that Lee would be the man. This shows the estimation of his compeers.*

As everything illustrative of the early life and the developing character of the great hero of the Civil War must possess an interest for his very numerous friends and admirers, we feel sure that we will be excused for adding to the reminiscences above given the following testimony from Mr. F. Schneider. It is of a different bearing from the foregoing, and clearly indicates important traits of character, showing a precision of idea, a clear conception of what he wanted, a close attention to minute details, and a faithful discharge of even the smallest obligation, which had much to do with the subsequent success of the man.

Mr. Schneider had a blacksmith-shop on the corner of Twentieth and G streets. Upon the first occasion of his acquaintance (1835) Lieutenant Lee was riding into the city from Arlington to his office, and happening to see Mr. Schneider shoeing a horse, he dismounted and inquired into his manner of shoeing horses. Being satisfied, he gave particular directions and left his horse to be shod. When he returned from the office he lifted each foot of the horse carefully, then nodded his head, and said to Mr. Schneider, "You are the first man I have ever come across that could shoe a horse by my directions." From that time all the Arlington horses were

* Colonel Macomb was present at the marriage of Lieutenant Sidney Smith Lee of the navy, brother of Robert E. Lee, who married Miss Mason, in the old Christ Church at Alexandria. The party were first entertained at General John Mason's house at Claremont. They then went to Arlington, where the festivities were continued. Lieutenant Robert Lee and his friends took part in this old Virginia frolic. Seven young men were bivouacked in one of the larger rooms at Arlington. Captain Canfield, one of the number, made much fun for the party. In the morning the negro servant made so much noise on the bare floor, bringing wood and making fires, that Canfield called out, "Moses, why not come up on the pony?" At this point Mr. Custis threw the door wide open and called out, "'Sleep no more; Macbeth hath murdered sleep.'"

Every night before the party retired punch was bounteously dispensed from a punch-bowl which had belonged to General Washington. In the bottom of the bowl was a painting of a ship, the hull resting in the bottom, the mast projecting to the brim. The rule was to drink down to the hull—a rule strictly observed.

As this bowl has a history, it may be stated that it was presented to General Washington by Colonel Fitzhugh, a former aide-de-camp, who afterward left Virginia and settled in the Genesee Valley in Western New York.

sent to Mr. Schneider to be shod. When ordered to Mexico his high regard for Mr. Schneider led him to go from the War Department to his shop to bid him good-bye. The year before the Civil War repairing and fencing was done at Arlington, and Colonel Lee came to Mr. Schneider to have made a peculiar gate-latch that could be opened without dismounting. He wanted a dozen, and Mr. Schneider said, "Well, colonel, I will make one. If that pleases you, I will make eleven more." He came a few days after the one was ready for him. He took it with him and had it put on the gate, then came back and said, "Make the eleven. It is the very thing I want, and could not be improved." Since Mr. Schneider has retired from business one of the general's daughters was visiting at the surgeon-general's. She wanted a fan mended, and asked General Barnes to send it to her father's friend, Mr. Schneider. This was done, and Mr. Schneider was most happy to repair the fan. Mr. Schneider says his heart always warmed at the sight of Lee: it was pleasant to serve him. He would listen to suggestions which Mr. Schneider felt free to make, and was always reasonable and just. Among the books of Mr. Schneider's extensive library is the *Life of General Lee*, by John Esten Cooke, and in his catalogue, printed by himself, he appends in a footnote the following incident:

"In the fall of 1860 the general rode over from Arlington to the iron-foundry of Mr. Schneider, corner of Eighteenth and Pennsylvania Avenue, and drew from his pocket the draft of a peculiar kind of coulter which he requested to be cast for him to use in breaking up a lot of heavy meadow-sod. The price of the coulter was fixed at two dollars, and the colonel's old market-man called for it a day or two after. A few months passed and the peaceful pursuits of agriculture were exchanged for the strife and turmoil of war. General Lee pitched his tent in the South, and the quiet scenes of Arlington knew him no more. Late in 1861, amid the stirring scenes that were enacting around him, whilst all the cares and responsibilities of his position were resting upon General Lee, Mr. Schneider received by the hands of a little boy two one-dollar gold-pieces with a brief note of apology."

We now approach a somewhat important period in General Lee's life—that in which he was first to clearly show the material of which he was made and his fine ability as an engineer. In the year 1837 he received orders to proceed to St. Louis, which city at that time was threatened with a serious disaster from the deflection of the main current of the Mississippi River to the Illinois side, and the danger of its cutting a new channel through the bottom-lands. Here he was to make surveys and consider the best means of averting this threatened peril, which would make of St. Louis an inland city, and to report to the Department at Washington. In addition, he was entrusted with other duties connected with the navigation of the Mississippi, the details of which we can best give in the words of General Meigs, quartermaster-general U. S. A., who, then a lieutenant, accompanied the young engineer as his assistant, and who furnishes for this work the following valuable account of their operations:

In the summer of 1837, Lieutenant Robert E. Lee, corps of Engineers, was ordered by the Engineer department to proceed to the Mississippi River, and, with an appropriation made by Congress for the purpose, to make examination, plans, and estimates for the improvement of the navigation of the Mississippi at the harbor of St. Louis, where sandbars threatened to interfere with the use of the water-front of the city, known as the levee, upon which they were encroaching, and where the main channel of the river showed a tendency to change from the Missouri to the Illinois shore. He was also instructed to make surveys and plans for improving the navigation of this river near the point where the Des Moines enters it from the west, and above and about the mouth of Rock River, which enters from the east. At both these points the river flows over ledges of rocks, with a narrow and tortuous channel. During the season of low water all steamboats at these points were obliged to discharge at least a part of their cargo, which was placed upon what were then known as "keel-boats" and towed by horses along the shores to the head of the rapids. The country about these rapids was only then being

surveyed and opened for settlement. No railroad had at that time crossed the Alleghanies.

Lieutenant Lee left Washington about June, accompanied by Lieutenant Meigs as his assistant. They went by the way of the Pennsylvania Canal to Pittsburg, where they took a steamer and descended to Louisville, stopping at Cincinnati (both of these were then small cities, compared with what they are to-day). At Louisville they found a small steamboat which had just been completed under the supervision of Captain Shreeves, famous as the inventor and operator of the "snag-boat." His son-in-law, Captain Morehead, was the captain of the surveying boat; and here, with the aid of the boatmen, Lieutenant Lee organized and outfitted a strong surveying-party of river-men. The steamer proceeded to the Des Moines rapids, touching at St. Louis on the way. (St. Louis's principal distinction then was that it was the headquarters of the North-western fur trade. Ashley, Chouteau, and Sandford had there their principal offices, and thence despatched expeditions which penetrated the Rocky Mountains and fought battles in Oregon and Washington Territories with the Canadian voyageurs and Scotch servants of the Hudson Bay Company.) Arrived at the lower or Des Moines rapids of the Mississippi, the party attempted to pass the rapids in their steamer, and quickly experienced the difficulties of the navigation by finding themselves fast on the rocks of one of the lower channels. All efforts to float the steamer failed, and the party proceeded to make their survey of these rapids while using the steamer as a base of operations, the surveying-parties leaving the steamer in small boats in the morning and returning at night.

Having completed the survey of the Des Moines rapids, they took passage in a steamer which they found at the head of the rapids, and ascended to Rock Island. There they discovered another steamer wrecked upon a rock in the Rock Island rapids; her hull was stove in and her lower deck was partly under water, but her upper cabin, with its staterooms, was dry and habitable. Holes made for removing the engines yawned in the cabin-floor. Lieutenant Lee made this wreck his base of operations during the survey of the upper rapids.

From the stern, after the day's work was over, the young men of the party replenished the larder by fishing for blue catfish, pike, and pickerel. About the end of October the work on this part of the river was finished, and they returned to the Des Moines rapids on a passing steamer. At these rapids they found the banks lined with birch-bark canoes and Indian tepees, a tribe of Chippewas having assembled there to receive the fall distribution of presents from the agents. Owing to a rise in the river, they now found themselves able to float their own steamer, in which they returned to St. Louis.

Here the second story of a warehouse on the levee was rented as an office, where the maps giving the results of their surveys of the upper river were prepared. While the reduction of their notes to the form of maps was going on parties were placed in the field on each bank of the river. Signals were established, and the river was thoroughly triangulated and sounded from the mouth of the Missouri to some distance below St. Louis. These surveys were completed and mapped, and the party broke up. The men were discharged, and Lieutenant Lee and Lieutenant Meigs returned to Washington, laying up their steamer for the winter on the Ohio, and passing through Wheeling by way of the Cumberland road. At Frederick, Md., they took cars on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, crossing some divides by horse-power. No locomotive had at that time reached Frederick.

Lieutenant Lee made up his report, in which he recommended the improvement of the two rapids by the straightening and widening of the channels and by blasting and moving the rocks which obstructed navigation. He recommended, in regard to the St. Louis problem, the proper course of the dikes to deflect the currents and to close at low water the eastern or Illinois channel by connecting Bloody Island with the eastern shore.

These reports and maps were published by Congress, which for many years continued to make appropriations for the execution of the work designed and recommended by Lieutenant Lee.

Probably the only survivor of that expedition is General

Meigs, who takes pleasure in contributing this reminiscence to the memoirs of General Lee. It was the beginning of the permanent improvement of the upper Mississippi River. At that time only a few log houses, traders' stores, and military posts existed on the shores of the rapids and for hundreds of miles above. The land had never been surveyed or brought into the market.

The preliminary survey above described was not the whole of Lieutenant Lee's connection with the improvement of the Mississippi. For some years thereafter he superintended the progress of the work at the points designated. During the prosecution of this work at St. Louis there was much free criticism and adverse prediction indulged in by the people of the threatened city. Heedless of this public clamor, the young Engineer officer pursued the even tenor of his way, and finally convinced his critics by the best of logic, that of success, that there might be some intelligence and ability outside of political assemblies and newspaper offices.

General Lee has described to the writer of this work the general method in which he achieved success in this difficult undertaking. His method was to force the current back into its original channel by driving piles and constructing cribs and wing-dams. The eddies thus created caused a deposit of sediment to be made between the dams, which gradually filled up the place where the wash-out had occurred with solid matter, and diverted the unsteady stream back into its original course.

Operations at the rapids also were prosecuted in accordance with the plans and under the directions of Lieutenant Lee, and an available channel gradually formed. Many years later, the commerce of the river requiring larger boats than could safely venture through the Des Moines channel, a ship-canal was constructed on the western shore of the river at this place, notwithstanding the fact that railroads then lined both shores of the stream. The commerce thus made available has supplied the wants of the millions who have since made of the upper Mississippi and of the plains of the Red River of the North the granary of North America. Cities have sprung up which, like

Minneapolis and St. Paul, count their inhabitants by the hundred thousands; St. Louis, then a small town with a few thousand inhabitants, has grown into a noble city peopled by more than three hundred and fifty thousand souls; and the worthless prairie-land of that day has now been largely converted into city lots of immense value. It is not claimed here that the engineering skill of Lieutenant Lee was in any sense the cause of this prosperity, but simply that he performed services that helped to render it possible.

Although we have said so much in regard to the appearance and character of Robert E. Lee, yet General Meigs's testimony to that effect is so valuable, when we consider his opportunities of thoroughly knowing him, that we cannot omit it. He expresses himself as remembering with pleasure and affection "his intimate associations with Lieutenant Lee, a man then in the vigor of youthful strength, with a noble and commanding presence, and an admirable, graceful, and athletic figure. He was one with whom nobody ever wished or ventured to take a liberty, though kind and generous to his subordinates, admired by all women, and respected by all men. He was the model of a soldier and the beau ideal of a Christian man."

Some letters of General Lee, written at this period, are sufficiently characteristic to be of interest to the reader, and we may be excused for quoting them. One, written to his wife and dated "Louisville, June 5, 1839," contains the following passage :

"You do not know how much I have missed you and the children, my dear Mary. To be alone in a crowd is very solitary. In the woods I feel sympathy with the trees and birds, in whose company I take delight, but experience no interest in a strange crowd. I hope you are all well and will continue so, and therefore must again urge upon you to be very prudent and careful of those dear children. If I could only get a squeeze at that little fellow turning up his sweet mouth to 'keese Baba'! You must not let him run wild in my absence, and will have to exercise firm authority over all of them. This will not require severity, or even strictness, but constant attention and an unwavering course. Mildness and forbearance,

tempered by firmness and judgment, will strengthen their affection for you, while it will maintain your control over them."

We are fortunately enabled to add to this a letter of much value as detailing incidents in the life of the young lieutenant of Engineers while on duty in the West. The Dick referred to may remain incognito, as his personality is of no importance to the narrative. The letter is addressed externally to "Lieut. J. E. Johnston, Topographical Engineers, Washington, D. C.," but internally "My Dear Colonel," the title by which General Johnston was then familiarly known to his intimate friends:

"ST. LOUIS, 26th July, 1839.

"MY DEAR COLONEL : Upon my return here some few days since from the Rapids I found your letter of the 1st. It did me good to hear of the boys, especially as it was all good. Kan's fishing-project I fear is more natural than feasible, and its merits in so benighted a place as Washington will never be appreciated. I now contemplate you, therefore, as one of the stars in General Scott's staff. While up the river I fell in with Dick, and escorted him from Galena to Burlington, his headquarters. General Brooke happened at Galena while we were there, and, besides the pleasure of meeting him again, we had much sport in fighting the battles of Old Point over again. But it was done temperately and in a temperance manner, for the general has forsworn strong potations, and our refreshment consisted of only soda-water and ice-cream, delicacies that had been untasted by the general for the last *nine* years, and four times a day did we pay our respects to the fountain and freezer. Dick had been up to Dubuque to let out one of his roads, and, finding some spare days on his hands, 'accoutred as he was,' he plunged into a pleasure-party for the Falls of St. Anthony that came along in fine spirits with music playing and colors flying. Would you like to hear of his apparel? A little short-sleeved, short-waisted, short-skirted, brown linen coat, well acquainted with the washboard, and intended for a smaller man than our friend; a faded blue calico shirt; domestic cloth pants; a pair of commodious brogans; and a hat torn, broken, and discolored. Now, hear him laugh as he presents himself

for a dance, arms akimbo, and you have him before you. I believe, though, it was a concerted thing with him, for whom should he meet but his Indian friend 'Hole-in-the-Day' and his faithful *Red She*, who showed him his old blanket that she religiously wrapt herself in, but upon examining *his* fingers her good copper rings were not there! He complains bitterly of his present waste of life, looks thin and dispirited, and is acquainted with the cry of every child in Iowa. He is well practised in pork-eating and promiscuous sleeping, and is a friend to Quakers, or rather their pretty daughters. . . .

"News recently arrived that the Sioux had fallen upon a party of Chippeways and taken one hundred and thirty scalps. The *Hole-in-the-Day*, Dick's friend, had gone in advance with the larger party, and they did not come up with him. It is expected that this chief, who is represented as an uncommon man, will take ample revenge, and this may give rise to fresh trouble. You will see the full accounts in the papers. . . .

"Bliss is well at the Rapids, with the whole fleet, and I hope jerking out the stones fast.

"R. E. LEE."

We must pass with more rapidity over the few subsequent years of his career. As already said, he was made captain of Engineers in 1838. In 1840 he resumed his legitimate duties of military engineer, and in 1842 was sent to Fort Hamilton in New York harbor, where he was occupied for several years in improving the defences. In 1844 he was appointed on the board of visitors to the Military Academy at West Point. These services occupied him until the year 1846, when the breaking out of hostilities between the United States and Mexico opened a wider field for the exercise of his abilities as a military engineer, and offered his first opportunity for that practical education in the art of war which was afterward to bear such abundant fruit.

CHAPTER III.

THE MEXICAN WAR.

Causes of the War.—A Daring Scout.—Siege of Vera Cruz.—Cerro Gordo.—Passage of the Pedregal.—Contreras, Churubusco, Chapultepec.—Letter from Mexico.—Testimony of Generals Wilcox and Hunt.—Encomium from General Johnston.

IN 1846 war was declared between the United States and the neighboring republic of Mexico—a war in which Robert E. Lee bore a prominent part, and in which he gained great distinction both as an able engineer and as a gallant and daring soldier. His connection with this war forms so important a chapter in his history that some brief account of its causes and the general course of its events becomes here necessary.

Texas while yet a sub-province of the republic of Mexico had attracted a considerable population of immigrants from the United States, who confided in the promise of the Mexican Cortes, promulgated in 1824, that as soon as it had gained sufficient importance it should be erected into an independent state of the republic, and be made “free, sovereign, and independent in whatever exclusively related to its internal government and administration.”

The foreign immigration which took place on the faith of this proclamation called forth in 1830 a counter-decree from Bustamente, then President or tyrant of the republic, in which he prohibited the ingress of foreigners. To execute his edicts he introduced a considerable force of Mexican soldiers into Texas, which was thus virtually placed under military rule.

This act called forth strong opposition among the inhabitants, and the soldiers were forced to leave the country. Bustamente's rule ended in 1832, he being succeeded by Santa Anna as President. Shortly afterward Texas petitioned to be erected into a separate state, as promised in the act of 1824. Austin, the agent sent by the Texans to the capital city, being

unable to obtain any reply to his petition from the Mexican Government, wrote to the Texan authorities and advised them to organize a state government without waiting for the action of the Mexican Congress.

This action was considered treasonable, and Austin was arrested and imprisoned for over a year. Santa Anna had meanwhile overthrown the Mexican constitution and made himself military dictator of the "republic of Mexico," so called. The people of Texas resented this usurpation, organized a state government, and raised troops to resist the invasion which they had every reason to expect. They were not mistaken. Troops invaded the province, and an engagement took place at Gonzales on the 2d of October, 1835.

This was the first step in a war which resulted in the independence of Texas. In the battle of San Jacinto, April 21, 1836, the Mexicans suffered a complete defeat, and Santa Anna was taken prisoner. One of the terms of his release was the recognition of the independence of Texas, which had been erected into a republic on the 17th of March, with David G. Burnett for its first President.

On the 3d of March, 1837, the independence of this new power was recognized by the United States, two years afterward by France and England, and very soon by most of the European states.

As early as August 4, 1837, Texas proposed to unite herself with the United States. This proposition was declined by the administration of President Van Buren, and was not entertained till the term of President Tyler, when a resolution of Congress was passed setting forth the terms of a union of the republic of Texas with the United States. This proposition was formally adopted by the people of Texas assembled in convention on July 4, 1845, and a new constitution was formed preparatory to the admission of the young republic as a State of the Federal Union.

The independence of Texas had never been acknowledged by Mexico, and this action of the United States Government gave serious offence, which was evidenced by a remonstrance from General Almonte, the Mexican minister resident at Wash-

ington, who immediately afterward demanded his passports and left the country. All friendly intercourse between the United States and Mexico now ceased. Mr. Polk, who was then President, apprehending an invasion of Texan soil, sent General Zachary Taylor, with about five thousand men, to guard the new State of the American Union. Early in August, 1845, he took position at Corpus Christi, near the mouth of the Neuces River. On the 13th of January, 1846, he was ordered to advance to the Rio Grande, and reached the east bank of that river on March 28th, where he erected a fortress, called Fort Brown, directly opposite the Mexican city of Matamoras.

On the 26th of April, General Ampudia, the Mexican commander, gave notice that he considered hostilities commenced, and on the same day a force of 63 American soldiers were attacked on the Texan side of the river, and all killed or captured. This was the first blood shed in the war.

Two other battles took place on Texan soil—one near Palo Alto, where a Mexican army of about 6000 men was defeated; and the other at Resaca de la Palma, where the same army was utterly routed and the soil of Texas freed of its invaders.

A few days afterward General Taylor crossed the river, took possession of Matamoras, and carried the war definitely into Mexican territory. Fifty thousand volunteers were called for, and the army of General Taylor was rapidly reinforced by recruits from Texas and the adjoining States.

The plan of military operations now adopted at Washington was to invade Mexico on three different lines: one was from Matamoras to the interior, under the lead of General Taylor; another toward New Mexico and California, under the lead of General Kearney; while a third column, under General Wool, was to seize the northern departments of Mexico. With the latter column Captain Lee first entered the field of war.

The young officer of Engineers remained with General Wool's command until ordered to join the expedition of General Scott, and while with it he performed very important service, as instanced in the story, related by himself, of a scouting-expedition. This incident is of such interest as illustrative of the romance of war and of the daring of its hero that we here

briefly repeat it, as told by a friend who had heard him personally relate it:

Shortly before the battle of Buena Vista, General Wool, being ignorant of the position and movements of the enemy, but having been positively assured that Santa Anna had crossed the mountains and was encamped with his whole army at a point only twenty miles distant, determined to send out a scouting-party to ascertain the truth of this report. Captain Lee, who was present, at once volunteered to perform this duty. His offer was accepted, and he was directed to procure a guide and order a company of cavalry to meet him at the outer picket-line as escort. By some means, however, he missed the picket-post and his escort, and ere long found himself several miles beyond the lines with no company but his guide. This was a young Mexican who knew the country, and whom Captain Lee had promised the contents of a pocket-pistol if he should play false.

Dangerous as it was to proceed alone, to return was to abandon the enterprise for that night, and the daring scout galloped on. At a point about five miles from the reported place of encampment of the Mexican army the moonlight displayed numerous tracks of mules and wagons in the road. No artillery-tracks were visible, but these might have been obliterated by the others, and there was abundant reason to conclude that a strong foraging- or reconnoitering-party had passed here. The information thus obtained would have satisfied many officers, yet it was not sufficiently positive for Captain Lee, who determined to go on till he reached the picket-posts of the enemy.

To his surprise, he found no pickets. He concluded that he had missed them as he had those of his own army, and had ridden within the Mexican lines. In confirmation of this opinion, he soon found himself in view of what appeared to be large camp-fires on a hillside at no great distance. His guide, who was by this time in a pitiable state of fright, begged him earnestly to return, saying that there was a stream of water just beyond, and that he knew that Santa Anna's whole army was encamped on the other side.

But the daring scout was not yet quite satisfied, and, directing the guide to await his return, he galloped boldly forward. Soon he perceived what appeared to be the white tents of a large encampment. Reaching the banks of the stream, he heard beyond it loud talking and the usual noises of a camp.

By this time, however, he was near enough to be able to make better use of the moonlight, and discovered that his white tents were simply a large *flock of sheep*, and that his army was a train of wagons and the drovers of a large herd of cattle, mules, etc. Riding into their camp, he quickly learned from them that Santa Anna had not yet crossed the mountains, and that there were no Mexican forces in that locality.

He galloped back with this important news to the army, where he found his friends in a state of serious apprehension as to his safety, the intended escort having reported his disappearance. "But," said General Lee, "the most delighted man to see me was the old Mexican, the father of my guide, with whom I had been last seen by any of our people, and whom General Wool had arrested and proposed to hang if I was not forthcoming."

Though he had ridden forty miles that night, he was in the saddle again after a three hours' rest. He guided a body of cavalry to and far beyond the point to which he had gone the night before, and succeeded in ascertaining definitely the position, force, etc. of the enemy.

The signal victory of General Taylor at Buena Vista, in which a force of 20,000 Mexicans under Santa Anna was put to rout by 5000 Americans, virtually ended the war in the northern Mexican states. Meanwhile, during January and February, 1847, General Scott was collecting a large force in the neighborhood of Tampico to operate against Vera Cruz and the city of Mexico. Captain R. E. Lee joined this force by the particular request of General Scott.

About the last of February, General Scott embarked his troops and sailed for Vera Cruz, and on the 9th of March landed his army of 12,000 men a short distance south of that city, which he immediately proceeded to invest. The city was surrounded by a wall and defended by a powerful fortress, the

castle of San Juan de Ulloa, the number of guns being about 400. It was garrisoned by 5000 Mexican troops under General Morales.

The establishment of batteries and the other details of the siege were directed by Captain Lee, who prosecuted his labors with such vigor that by the 22d the batteries were ready to commence the bombardment which resulted on the 29th in the surrender of Vera Cruz and the adjacent fortifications. For his services on this occasion Captain Lee was favorably mentioned by General Scott in his report of the siege of Vera Cruz. Having gained a secure base of operations, General Scott advanced toward the city of Mexico; but on reaching Cerro Gordo, the point where the National Road emerges from the Tierra Caliente, he found himself confronted by General Santa Anna with a numerous army, which this general had, in spite of his defeat at Buena Vista, thoroughly reorganized and put in position to oppose Scott's advance.

Cerro Gordo was of such formidable strength that a direct attack was deemed injudicious, and therefore it became necessary to adopt other means for its reduction. In the words of General Scott, "Reconnoissances were pushed in search of some practicable route other than the winding, zigzag road among the spurs of mountains, with heavy batteries at every turn. The reconnoissances were conducted with vigor under Captain Lee at the head of a body of pioneers, and at the end of the third day a passable way for light batteries was accomplished without alarming the enemy, giving the possibility of turning the extreme left of his line of defence and capturing his whole army, except the reserve, that lay a mile or two higher up the road. Santa Anna said that he had not believed a goat could have approached him in that direction. Hence the surprise and the results were the greater."

A large force was sent along the route thus made passable, and, though it was discovered by the enemy before it had quite reached the point desired, it had gained a position which enabled it to storm and carry the heights of Cerro Gordo and rout the Mexican army, Santa Anna being defeated and forced to retire with great loss. General Scott, in his report of this battle, says:

"I am compelled to make special mention of Captain R. E. Lee, Engineer. This officer was again indefatigable during these operations in reconnoissances as daring as laborious, and of the utmost value. Nor was he less conspicuous in planting batteries and in conducting columns to their stations under the heavy fire of the enemy."

An interesting incident which occurred during one of the reconnoissances mentioned by General Scott was related to the writer by John Fitzwalter, who acted as a guide to Captain Lee during this campaign, and who himself was so daring as to gain from the Mexicans the title of Juan Diablo, or, to put it in plain English, John the Devil.

During the reconnoissance in question Captain Lee had ventured too far from his supporting column, and unexpectedly found himself in the midst of the enemy and in a position of great danger. He was forced to take refuge beneath a fallen tree, near which was a spring to which the Mexicans frequently came for water. While he lay hidden in this perilous covert hostile soldiers frequently passed over the tree, and even sat down on it and entered into conversation, without discovering the somewhat nervous individual beneath it. He was obliged to remain there until the coming of night enabled him to retire from the dangerous locality.

It may not be amiss to mention at this point that Captain Lee was not the only one of his family who took part in these operations. His elder brother, Lieutenant Sidney Smith Lee of the navy, served in the bombardment of Vera Cruz in command of a detachment of seamen who worked the guns in the trenches. These guns were under the general direction of Captain Lee, who has often been heard to relate with what anxiety after each discharge he would look to see if his brother was safe, and how reassured he felt when he saw his white teeth gleaming through the smoke.

Early in these operations Captain Lee had been appointed on the personal staff of General Scott, who had the greatest confidence in his judgment and ability, and was always strongly influenced by his opinion in council.

In the subsequent campaign in the Valley of Mexico to Cap-

tain Lee is mainly due the capture of Contreras and the reduction of Churubusco—successes which opened the way for General Scott to the walls of Mexico.

A distinguished officer (General Henry J. Hunt) who participated in the Mexican campaign thus describes the operations at Contreras:

“On the 19th of August, 1847, General Scott’s headquarters were at San Augustin, a small village four or five miles south of Churubusco. The main road running south from the city of Mexico forks at Churubusco, one branch going to San Augustin, while the other runs in a south-westerly direction, and passes to the east of Contreras and of a somewhat elevated plateau beyond or south of Contreras. The distances from Churubusco to the plateau and from the plateau to San Augustin are each about equal to the distance from San Augustin to Churubusco. This triangular space, included between the two roads and a ridge of hills south of San Augustin as the third side, is called the Pedregal. This Pedregal is a vast surface of volcanic rocks and scoria broken into every possible form, presenting sharp ridges and deep fissures, exceedingly difficult even in the daytime for the passage of infantry, and utterly impassable for artillery, cavalry, or single horsemen. There are occasional intervals, especially near San Augustin, where small fields have been made and tilled; but these little oases grow smaller and more infrequent toward the west, and a mile or two from the plateau cease altogether, so that the country from above Contreras to the range of hills on the south is an almost unbroken field of desolation, such as lava would present if in a state of ebullition. Indeed, it appears like a sea of such lava suddenly congealed, with here and there a clump of hardy bushes and dwarf trees which have managed to force an existence from the apparently sterile rocks. By taking advantage of the small open spaces a difficult, crooked, and hardly passable road—not much better than a mule-track—had been opened from San Augustin to the plateau, in front of which it joins the road from the city of Mexico. On this plateau General Valencia had intrenched his fine division, about six thousand strong, with twenty-four guns, which com-

pletely commanded the approach from San Augustin. A mile or more north of Contreras and the neighboring hamlet of Anselda, and on the main city road, lay General Santa Anna with a portion of the reserves of the Mexican army.

"On the morning of the 19th, General Scott ordered Pillow's and Twiggs's divisions to move from San Augustin toward the plateau, the ground having been previously carefully reconnoitered by Captain R. E. Lee, assisted by Lieutenants Beauregard and Tower of the Engineers. Pillow was directed to improve the road with his force, and, if possible, make it practicable for artillery, while Twiggs was thrown in advance to protect the working-parties.

"General Scott in his official report, written that same day, says: 'By three o'clock this afternoon the advanced divisions came to a point where the new road could not be continued except under the direct fire of twenty-two pieces of the enemy's artillery (most of them of large calibre), placed in a camp strongly intrenched to oppose our operations, surrounded by every advantage of ground, and, besides, being reinforced hourly by immense bodies of cavalry and infantry, which, coming from the city over an excellent road beyond the volcanic fields, were consequently entirely beyond the reach of our cavalry and artillery.

"Arriving on the ground an hour later, I found that Pillow's and Twiggs's divisions had advanced to dislodge the enemy, picking their way (all officers on foot) along his front, and extending themselves toward the road from the city and the enemy's left. . . . The battle, though mainly stationary, continued to rage with great violence until nightfall.'

"In the mean time, portions of Riley's, Persifer Smith's, Shields's, and Cadwallader's brigades had made their way across the Pedregal to Contreras, whence they watched the approach of the Mexican troops from the city. Captain Lee accompanied these troops, and the nature of the ground can perhaps best be understood by the description given of it by one who passed over it at the time.

"He says: 'Late in the morning of the 19th the brigade of which my regiment was a part (Riley's) was sent out from San

Augustin in the direction of Contreras. We soon struck a region over which it was said no horses could go, and men only with difficulty.

“No road was available; my regiment was in advance, my company leading, and its point of direction was a church-spire near or at Contreras. Taking the lead, we soon struck the Pedregal (a field of volcanic rock like boiling scoria suddenly solidified), pathless, precipitous, and generally compelling rapid gait in order to spring from point to point of rock, on which two feet could not rest, and which cut through our shoes. A fall upon this sharp material would have seriously cut and injured one, whilst the effort to climb some of it cut the hands.

“Such was the general character of the portion crossed by my regiment, and I believe by the brigades, though many, not pushing as I did, may have picked out a circuitous and better route.

“Just before reaching the main road from Contreras to the city of Mexico we reached a watery ravine, the sides of which were nearly perpendicular, up which I had to be pushed and then to pull others.

“On looking back over this bed of lava or scoria, I saw the troops, much scattered, picking their way very slowly, while of my own company, some eighty or ninety strong, only five men crossed with me or during some twenty minutes after.

“With these five I examined the country beyond, and struck upon the small guard of a paymaster's park, which, from the character of the country over which we had passed, was deemed perfectly safe from capture.

“My men gained a paymaster's chest well filled with bags of silver dollars, and the firing and fuss we made both frightened the guard with the belief that the infernals were upon them and made our men hasten to our support.

“Before sundown all of Riley's—and, I believe, of Cadwallader's, Smith's, and Pierce's brigades—were over, and by nine o'clock a council of war, presided over by Persifer Smith and counselled by Captain R. E. Lee, was held at the church.

“I have always understood that what was devised and finally determined upon was suggested by Captain Lee; at all events,

the council was closed by his saying that he desired to return to General Scott with the decision of General Smith, and that, as it was late, the decision must be given as soon as possible, since General Scott wished him to return in time to give directions for co-operation.

“During the council and for hours after the rain fell in torrents, whilst the darkness was so intense that one could move only by groping.

“To illustrate: my company again led the way to gain the Mexican rear, and when, after two hours of motion, light broke sufficiently to enable us to see a companion a few feet off, we had not moved four hundred yards, and the only persons present were half a dozen officers and one guide.

“Captain Lee left the council to join General Scott. History gives him the credit of having succeeded, but it has always seemed incredible to me when I recollect the distance amid darkness and storm, and the dangers of the Pedregal which he must have traversed, and that, too, I believe, entirely unaccompanied. Scarcely a step could have been taken without danger of death; but that to him, a true soldier, was the willing risk of duty in a good cause. I would not believe it could have been made, that passage of the Pedregal, if he had not said he made it.’

“General Scott in the report from which we have already quoted, says of this same night: ‘It was already dark, and the cold rain had begun to fall in torrents on our unsheltered troops. Wet, hungry, and without the possibility of sleep, all our gallant corps, I learn, are full of confidence, and only wait for the last hour of darkness to gain the position whence to storm and carry the position of the enemy. Of the seven officers despatched since about sundown from my position, opposite the enemy’s centre, and on this side of the field of rocks and lava, to communicate instructions to the hamlet (Contreras), not one has succeeded in getting through those difficulties, increased by darkness. They have all returned.

“But the gallant and indefatigable Captain Lee of the Engineers, who has been constantly with the operating forces, is just in from Shields, Smith, Cadwallader, etc. to report as

above, and to request that a powerful diversion be made against the centre of the intrenched camp to-morrow morning.

“‘Brigadier-general Twiggs, cut off from the portion of his division beyond the impracticable ground, and Captain Lee, are gone to collect the forces remaining on this side, with which to make that diversion about five o'clock in the morning.’”*

“‘The troops were collected, the diversion made, and the result of the combined movement, made possible only by Captain Lee's services, was the brilliant victory of Contreras early on the following morning.

“‘Subsequently, General Scott, whilst giving testimony before a court of inquiry, had occasion to refer to these operations, and he thus speaks of the service rendered on this occasion by Captain Lee:

“‘Captain Lee, Engineers, came to me from the hamlet with a message from Brigadier-general Smith, I think, about the same time (midnight). He, having passed over the difficult ground by daylight, found it just possible to return to San Augustin in the dark—*the greatest feat of physical and moral courage performed by any individual, in my knowledge, pending the campaign.*’

“‘When we remember that Captain Lee left the council-room at Contreras to pass over miles of such ground as we have described, in a pitch-dark night, without light or company, with the additional danger of wandering either to the right or left and thus falling into the hands of Valencia or Santa Anna, the risk of being met by some of those straggling bands of Mexicans which we had seen in the Pedregal, with no guide but the wind as it drove the cold rain in torrents against his face, or an occasional flash of lightning to give him a momentary glimpse of the country around him,—it will be acknowledged that General Scott, considering the object for which this was done, the manner of doing it, and the results, has characterized this deed of devotion by the only terms, exalted as they are, that could appropriately describe it.’”†

* See *Ex. Doc. No. 65, Senate, 1st Session 30th Cong.*, p. 73.

† General Hunt has given the following interesting incident which occurred at the meeting of the Massachusetts Branch Cincinnati Society, held at Boston, July 4, 1871 :

In the battle that followed the events so fully described by General Hunt, Captain Lee bore an important part. The movement against the enemy commenced at three o'clock in the morning, a tedious march through darkness, rain, and mud, under the guidance of Captain Lee, bringing the assailing columns by sunrise to an elevation in the rear of the enemy's forces. An assault was at once made, the intrenchments of the enemy stormed, and in seventeen minutes after the charge was ordered the surprised Mexicans were in full flight and the American flag floating proudly over their works.

The subsequent movements may be briefly described. The victory of Contreras being complete, General Scott next advanced to Coyoacan, a strongly-fortified place, which Captain Lee was sent to reconnoitre with Captain Kearney's troop, First Dragoons, supported by Major Loring's rifle regiment. Another reconnoissance was sent under Lieutenant Stevens of the Engineers toward the strongly-fortified convent of San Pablo in the hamlet of Churubusco, one mile distant. Captain Lee, having completed his first reconnoissance, was next ordered to conduct Pierce's brigade, by a third road, to a point from which an attack could be made on the enemy's right and rear, thus favoring the movement on the convent and tending to cut off the line of retreat to the capital. Shields

"Upon that occasion General Silas Casey was admitted to the society. As usual, a speech of welcome was made. With admirable taste he ignored in his acknowledgment the Civil War, but gave them interesting points on the Mexican War (he commanded the stormers of Twiggs's division at Chapultepec), and in his speech he referred to me. So, as usual on such occasions, they had me up. I was 'dead broke' on matter for a speech, but it occurred to me that, as the Pedregal was fresh in my mind, I would give them a little more Mexican history, and I recited, glibly enough, the story. Of course I did not mention the name of the hero. I saw that they all thought it was General Casey. I kept dark until the close, amidst repeated demands of 'Name him! Name him!' When I got through and the name was again vociferously demanded, I replied, 'It is a name of which the old army was and is justly proud—that of Robert E. Lee, then a captain of Engineers, and since world-wide in fame as the distinguished leader of the Confederate armies.'

"For a moment there was unbroken silence, then such a storm of applause as is seldom heard. I remarked that I had been desirous to test the society, which represented all shades of political opinions, and was glad to see they could recognize heroism and greatness even in a former enemy."

was ordered to follow Pierce closely and to take command of the left wing.

The battle, thus ordered, soon raged violently along the whole line. Shields, in particular, was hard pressed and in danger of being overwhelmed by the hosts of the foe. Tidings of this threatened disaster were brought to General Scott by Captain Lee, who was at once ordered to conduct two troops of the Second Dragoons and the Rifles to the support of the left wing. The contest ended in the repulse of the enemy and a brilliant victory for General Scott's army.

This victory was followed by another, on the 8th of September, at the Molino del Rey. The troops were now rapidly approaching the capital city of Mexico, and the Engineer officers, Captain Lee, Lieutenant Beauregard, and others, were kept engaged in reconnoissances, which they performed with great daring and success. Then succeeded one of the most daring exploits of the war, that brilliant charge by which were stormed the heights of Chapultepec, a steep hill bristling with walls, mines, and batteries, yet up which our infantry columns rushed with a fiery valor and impetuosity which the Mexicans were quite unable to withstand. The heights were carried and the enemy put to flight.

In this brilliant affair Captain Lee was wounded, and, though eager to advance, was compelled to retire from loss of blood. In his official report General Scott again spoke of him in words of the highest compliment, remarking that he was "as distinguished for felicitous execution as for science and daring," and further stated that "Captain Lee, so constantly distinguished, also bore important orders from me (September 13th) until he fainted from a wound and the loss of two nights' sleep at the batteries."

It is evident, in fact, that General Scott had formed an exalted opinion of the valor and military genius of his young captain of Engineers. He makes, indeed, throughout the reports of his Mexican campaign frequent mention of three officers of the Engineer corps who were afterward to achieve high distinction in another field—Captain R. E. Lee, First Lieutenant P. G. T. Beauregard, and Second Lieutenant G.

B. McClellan. Yet there is every evidence that Captain Lee was his special favorite, and there is hardly a despatch in which his name is not honorably mentioned. We may add to the above the statement made by the Hon. Reverdy Johnson, that he "had heard General Scott more than once say that his success in Mexico was largely due to the skill, valor, and undaunted energy of Robert E. Lee." Years afterward General Scott was heard to declare, "Lee is the greatest military genius in America."

These brilliant services were not left without that recognition which is most dear to the heart of a soldier. Lee was steadily promoted. His gallant conduct at Cerro Gordo brought him the brevet rank of major; his services at Contreras and Churubusco brought him the additional brevet of lieutenant-colonel; and after Chapultepec he was nominated for the brevet rank of colonel—distinctions fully earned by his skill and valor.

The victory last mentioned was immediately followed by the capture of the forts which guarded the roads leading into the city and the occupation of the Mexican capital. This virtually ended the war. There was some guerilla warfare, but no battles of importance, after this achievement, the Mexicans giving up the contest as hopeless.

The terms on which peace was granted, as is well known, were highly advantageous to the United States, and perhaps in no just sense disadvantageous to Mexico, for the provinces which were ceded to the United States, though they have been raised to such a high value by Anglo-Saxon enterprise and energy, were almost worthless in the hands of the supine Mexicans. The indemnity which the Mexican Government received for these provinces was probably of more value to it, at that time, than the provinces themselves, and possibly the vast wealth in gold and silver which they contained might have yet been undiscovered had the Mexican rule continued, as it had remained undiscovered for previous centuries of Spanish dominion.

The remarks here made are preparatory to a quotation which we design to make from a hitherto unpublished letter by Gen-

eral Lee, in which he shows a shrewd political judgment and a correct idea of the proper method of dealing with vacillating diplomatists, though it savors rather of the soldier than of the politician. The letter also contains a passage indicative of General Lee's quiet love of a joke which is too good to omit. It is dated "City of Mexico, 12 April, 1848," and is written to one of his young lady-cousins. We quote only those parts of public interest, beginning with the witticism alluded to:

"It seems that all in Alexandria are progressing as usual, and that nothing will stop their marrying and being given in marriage. Tell Miss —— she had better dismiss that young divine and marry a soldier. There is some chance of the latter being shot, but it requires a particular dispensation of Providence to rid her of the former. Since the reception of your letter we have had the official notification of the ratification of the treaty by our Senate, brought on by Major Graham, and have learned of the arrival at Vera Cruz of the commissioner, Mr. Sevier, who has been preceded by the attorney-general, Mr. Clifford. I fear this hot despatch of envoys will cause the Mexicans to believe that we are over-anxious to accept their terms, and that they will be as coy, in proportion as we appear eager, to ratify on their part. They are very shrewd, and it will be difficult to get them to act before trying the strength of the new commissioner and making an effort for a mitigation of terms. The opportunity afforded them for pow-wow-ing they will be sure not to lose, but the time thus consumed, so precious to us, we cannot regain. In my humble opinion it would have been better to have sent out the naked instrument to General Butler, with instructions to submit it to the Mexican Government, and if within the prescribed time they thought proper to ratify it to pay them down the three millions and march the army home; but if not, to tear up the paper and make his arrangements to take the country up to the line from Tehuantepec to Osaqualco or whatever other southern boundary they should think proper for the United States. I think we might reasonably expect that they would lose no time in ratifying the present treaty. I might make a rough diplomatist, but a tolerably quick one."

The same letter gives us some insight into the methods by which Colonel Lee managed to kill dull time during his long detention in the city of Mexico. We may be pardoned for making a further quotation:

"I rode out a few days since for the first time to the church of Our Lady of Remedios. It is situated upon a hill at the termination of the mountains west of the city, and is said to be the spot to which Cortez retreated after being driven from the city on the memorable *Noche Triste*. I saw the cedar tree at Popotla, some miles nearer the city, in which it is said he passed a portion of that night. The 'trees of the Noche Triste,' so called from their blooming about the period of that event, are now in full bloom. The flower is a round ellipsoid, and of the most magnificent scarlet color I ever saw. I have two of them in my cup before me now. I wish I could send them to you. The holy image was standing on a large silver maguey-plant, with a rich crown on her head and an immense silver petticoat on. There were no votaries at her shrine, which was truly magnificent, but near the entrance of the church on either side were the offerings of those whom she had relieved. They consist of representations in wax of the parts of the human body that she had cured of the diseases with which they had been affected. And I may say there were all parts. I saw many heads severed from the trunks. Whether they represented those that she had restored I could not learn. It would be a difficult feat."

We should be glad to give further details of his life while thus detained in the city of Mexico waiting on the slow movements of diplomacy. But there is no such information extant. Undoubtedly he was not idle during those slow-moving months, but occupied himself in exploring the surrounding country and in studies incidental to his profession. He was too full of health, vitality, earnestness, and ambition to be willing to rest content while there were new progress to make and new information to be attained; and as he was free from those small vices and cared not for those petty pastimes in which so many of his companions passed their hours of leisure, there can be no doubt that his energy

took the direction of study and observation, and that he was steadily though unknowingly fitting himself for the great part which he was destined in the future to play.

In fact, as regards this we are not confined to conjecture, but may relate an anecdote in point as told by General Magruder:

"After the fall of Mexico, when the American army was enjoying the ease and relaxation which it had bought by toil and blood, a brilliant assembly of officers sat over their wine discussing the operations of the capture and indulging hopes of a speedy return to the United States.

"One among them rose to propose the health of the captain of Engineers who had found a way for the army within the city, and then it was remarked that Captain Lee was absent. Magruder was despatched to bring him to the hall, and, departing on his mission, at last found the object of his search in a remote room of the palace busy on a map.

"Magruder accosted his friend and reproached him for his absence. The earnest worker looked up from his labors with a calm, mild gaze which we all remember, and, pointing to his instruments, shook his head.

"'But,' said Magruder in his impetuous way, 'this is mere drudgery. Make somebody else do it and come with me.'

"'No,' was the reply—'no, I am but doing my duty.'"

It is but just to add that we are indebted for much of our information concerning Captain Lee's life and exploits in Mexico to General Wilcox, who has kindly prepared for this work a long and valuable series of reminiscences of the Mexican War, and of Lee's connection therewith. In addition to the laudatory quotations from Scott's reports, General Wilcox presents some similarly favorable remarks from other prominent commanders in that war. General Persifer Smith, in his report of Contreras and Churubusco, says: "In adverting to the conduct of the staff I wish to record particularly my admiration of the conduct of Captain Lee of the Engineers. His reconnoissances, though pushed far beyond the bounds of prudence, were conducted with so much skill that their fruits were of the utmost value, the soundness of his judgment and his personal daring being equally conspicuous." General Shields,



CAPTAIN R. E. LEE.

FROM A PORTRAIT TAKEN IN 1852.

who with General Pierce attacked in the rear of Churubusco, in his report says: "As my command arrived I established the right upon a point recommended by Captain Lee of the Engineers, in whose skill and judgment I had the utmost confidence."

A testimonial to the same effect is given by General Twiggs in his report of the battle of Cerro Gordo, in which his division carried the heights and stormed the fortifications of the enemy. He remarks: "Although whatever I may say may add little to the good reputation of Captain Lee of the Engineer corps, yet I must indulge in the pleasure of speaking of the invaluable services which he rendered me from the time I left the main road until he conducted Riley's brigade to its position in rear of the enemy's strong work on the Jalapa road. I consulted him with confidence and adopted his suggestions with assurance. His gallantry and good conduct on both days, 17th and 18th of April, deserve the highest praise."

Colonel Riley, in his report of the same engagement, says: "Although not appropriately within the range of this report, yet, coming under my immediate observation, I cannot refrain from bearing testimony to the intrepid coolness and gallantry exhibited by Captain Lee of the Engineers when conducting the advance of my brigade under the heavy flank fire of the enemy."

General Twiggs, in his report of the battle of Contreras, further says: "To Captain Lee of the Engineers I have again the pleasure of tendering my thanks for the exceedingly valuable services rendered throughout the whole of these operations."

General Wilcox first made the acquaintance of Robert E. Lee at the siege of Vera Cruz, and says of him at that time: "I was much impressed with his fine appearance, either on horse or foot. Then he was in full manly vigor, *and the handsomest man in the army.*"

General Wilcox concludes: "I have given a brief outline of the operations in Mexico, in order that the references made to Captain Lee in the official reports of his superiors might be properly appreciated. It will be seen that the compliments

won by him were deserved—that he was active, untiring, skilful, courageous, and of good judgment. He is referred to as making roads over difficult routes, locating and constructing batteries, bringing over the Pedregal in the night important information that enabled the commanding general to give orders exactly applicable to the field of Contreras, and which were so brilliantly executed at an early hour the next morning, and in which the diversion under Colonel Ransom, directed by Captain Lee, had such good results, having been converted into a real attack. The quotations then show on what important missions he was sent during the conflict at Churubusco; that then he was sent to look at the base and hospital at Mixcoac, to see that it was made as secure as possible, for at it were the sick and wounded, reserve ordnance, etc.; and, finally, that he was wounded at Chapultepec slightly, and pretty well worn out from excessive work by night and day. It could hardly have been otherwise than that a captain with such encomiums from his superiors would be greatly distinguished should occasion ever be presented. All who knew him were prepared to accept him at once as a general when he was assigned to the command of the Army of Northern Virginia, and his success, great as it was, was only what had been anticipated.

“C. M. WILCOX.”

To General Hunt, who has already contributed so freely to this chapter, we are indebted for other reminiscences of Captain Lee of a very interesting character. The first of the two anecdotes given below relates to an earlier period of Lee's life, but, as it is referred to in the second, an incident of the Mexican War, they are both given here. They yield important glimpses into the personal feelings and character of the subject of this memoir:

“In 1843-44, I was stationed at Fort Hamilton, New York harbor. Captain Lee was the Engineer officer in charge of the works there, and I saw much of him. He was then about thirty-five years of age, as fine-looking a man as one would wish to see, of perfect figure and strikingly handsome. Quiet and dignified in manner, of cheerful disposition, always pleas-

ant and considerate, he seemed to me the perfect type of a *gentleman*. His family, then with him, consisted of Mrs. Lee, their little daughter Mary, and the two boys, Rooney (W. H. F.) and Custis, and formed a charming portion of our little society. He was a vestryman of the little parish church of Fort Hamilton, of which the post-chaplain was the rector, and as thorough in the discharge of his church as of other duties.

"But the Tractarian movement had reached America ; Tract No. XC. had been published. Puseyism was a bone of contention. The excitement invaded our little parish, and it created feeling, for the 'Low-Church' members vehemently suspected the rector of 'High-Church' views because of certain suspicious prayers that he used to which they had not been accustomed. From all this Captain Lee kept aloof, and, as he was altogether too important a member to make his views a matter of indifference, various were the efforts made to draw him out—each party hoping for his powerful support—but without success, for he always contrived in some pleasant way to avoid any expression of opinion that would commit him to either faction.

"One evening he came into the quarters of one of us youngsters, where a number of officers and one or two of the neighbors were assembled. Soon the inevitable subject came up and was discussed with considerable warmth, and, on the parts of two or three, with some feeling. Captain Lee was quiet, but, to those who understood him, evidently amused at the efforts to draw him out. On some direct attempt to do so he turned to me and in his impressive, grave manner said, 'I am glad to see that you keep aloof from the dispute that is disturbing our little parish. That is right, and we must not get mixed up in it ; we must support each other in that. But I must give you some advice about it, in order that we may understand each other : *Beware of Pussyism ! Pussyism* is always bad, and may lead to unchristian feeling ; therefore beware of *Pussyism !*'

"The ludicrous turn given by his pronunciation, and its aptness to the feeling that one or two had displayed, ended the

matter in a general burst of laughter, for the manner more than the words conveyed his meaning. It became rather a joke at my expense, however, for sometimes when several of us met he would look at me in a grave way, shake his head, and say, 'Keep clear of this *Pussyism*!' And that was as near as they ever got to committing Captain Lee to a Church quarrel.

"There were several young officers at Fort Hamilton at the time, some of whom afterward became prominent—notably Duncan, who so greatly distinguished himself in the Mexican War, and Sedgwick, between whom and Captain Lee a warm friendship existed, and who was killed at Spottsylvania fighting his old comrade.

"After leaving Fort Hamilton I met Captain Lee but once or twice until he came to Vera Cruz with General Scott, in the spring of 1847, when our old relations, which had been as intimate as the difference in our ages would permit, were renewed. After the surrender of Vera Cruz there was a report that the churches in town would not be opened for service, for fear that they might be 'desecrated by the heretics.' The object and effect of this upon the people could be easily divined, and General Scott sent to the proper authorities to *borrow* a couple of churches for the ensuing Sunday, as he had excellent chaplains. The hint was taken, and the churches all opened. There was one outside the walls near which one of our batteries had been constructed, and the edifice was somewhat injured in the cannonade, but it too was opened.

"As I had not been to church for a long time, I availed myself of this opportunity, but already on my arrival found the place crowded. As with all Catholic churches in that country, there were no pews. The congregation—mostly women—were on their knees in the body of the church, whilst the galleries and all other available space were filled by our volunteers, full of curiosity, for but few of them had ever seen the Catholic service. It was but a few years since the 'Native American' excitement, accompanied by violent demonstrations against Catholics, and the sacking of their churches in some of our large towns, had raged, and the feeling was not yet entirely over.

"I found not only that the church was full, but the door was blocked by a crowd of our soldiers. Patiently making my way, I finally got inside the door where I could see the altar. All present were on their knees or standing except on the left, where midway of the church a single bench had been brought and set against the wall. On this bench, in full uniform, epaulettes, and sword, sat General Scott and his staff, the general himself at the end nearest the altar, then his aid, Lieutenant Williams, then Captain Lee, Lieutenants Beauregard, Say, etc. The bench seemed full, but a few minutes afterward, looking in that direction, I caught Captain Lee's eye. He was evidently looking for this opportunity, for he motioned me toward him and made a movement indicating that there was room for me beside him. I had been longer in Mexico than these new-comers, and in my dilapidated old campaign dress felt that I would be a little out of place in the brilliant party. However, standing was tiresome, and I gradually picked my way to the bench, and found that he had a place ready for me by his side.

"It was evident that the service was a special one. Soon the acolytes were going round the church making the worshippers close up until a clear space was formed all round the congregation. Then one of the acolytes went to the altar, lighted a large thick wax candle, and brought it to General Scott. At first the general did not seem to comprehend it, but, taking in the situation, he took the candle and immediately handed it to Mr. Williams. The volunteers stared with open mouths. It was understood that General Scott, if successful in his campaign, must be a Presidential candidate at the next election. Hostility to the Catholic Church was *the* element with the 'American' party. The matter was getting interesting. In a moment or two the acolyte returned with another, but not so large or honorable a candle as the first. Finding the first one in the aid's hands and General Scott unprovided, he looked rather dazed, but acted promptly—blew out his light, went back to the altar, got another large one, and brought it to the general, who had to take it. I, being next to Williams, carefully looked away, and saw *nothing*

until the acolyte returned with the smaller candle lighted for *me*, which I took, and others were given to Captain Lee and the rest of the staff.

"Then we were requested to rise, were wheeled 'by twos' to the left, which brought General Scott in front of me and Captain Lee on my right. Soon a side-door opened just in front of General Scott, and an array of priests in gorgeous vestments filed out and formed in our front. Everything was clear enough now—a Church procession, in which General Scott and his staff—including poor me in my shabby old undress—had the place of honor. I looked at Captain Lee. He had that dignified, quiet appearance habitual to him, and looked as if the carrying of candles in religious processions was an ordinary thing with him. The music—and very good music it was—commenced, and the procession moved round the church. We had passed the altar, when an idea occurred to me upon which I could not refrain from acting, and I touched Captain Lee's elbow. He very properly gave me a rebuking look, but upon my repeating the touch he bent his head toward me and whispered, 'What is it?'—'Captain Lee?'—'Well?'—'I really hope there is no *Pussyism* in all this?' I glanced at him; his face retained its quiet appearance, but the corners of his eyes and mouth were twitching in the struggle to preserve his gravity.

"After we got into the City of Mexico, I frequently met him, but he was always busy. In the ensuing spring he examined the western part of the valley, and on his daily return to the city generally passed through Tacubaya, two miles west of it, where my battery was stationed, occupying a large hacienda in the suburbs, with gardens and orange-groves in blossom, in which there were great numbers of beautiful humming-birds. It was a pleasant spot, and Captain Lee almost always stopped for half an hour with me to enjoy its beauties. I remember nothing special in these visits except his desire to heal the differences between General Scott and some of his subordinate officers and the efforts he was making in that direction, about which he conversed with me. He was a peacemaker by nature."

We are fortunate in being able to add to the foregoing record the following highly valuable testimony, contributed expressly to this work by General Joseph E. Johnston, one of the ablest and most distinguished commanders in the Confederate army. Like all who knew Robert E. Lee, General Johnston testifies to his noble character and agreeable manner, and concludes with an interesting instance of his warm sympathy:

"No one among men but his own brothers had better opportunity to know General Lee than I. We entered the Military Academy together as classmates, and formed then a friendship never impaired. It was formed very soon after we met, from the fact that my father served under his in the celebrated Lee's Legion. We had the same intimate associates, who thought, as I did, that no other youth or man so united the qualities that win warm friendship and command high respect. For he was full of sympathy and kindness, genial and fond of gay conversation, and even of fun, that made him the most agreeable of companions, while his correctness of demeanor and language and attention to all duties, personal and official, and a dignity as much a part of himself as the elegance of his person, gave him a superiority that every one acknowledged in his heart. He was the only one of all the men I have known who could laugh at the faults and follies of his friends in such a manner as to make them ashamed without touching their affection for him, and to confirm their respect and sense of his superiority.

"I saw strong evidence of the sympathy of his nature the morning after the first engagement of our troops in the Valley of Mexico. I had lost a cherished young relative in that action, known to General Lee only as my relative. Meeting me, he suddenly saw in my face the effect of that loss, burst into tears, and expressed his deep sympathy as tenderly in words as his lovely wife would have done. J. E. JOHNSTON."